

WESTERNER IN WASHINGTON

CIA ripe for study

By ALLEN DRURY

In the slow, rambling, lackadaisical way in which people approach the major problems of government, somebody with some authority and stature has finally approached the problem of the Central Intelligence Agency. Herbert Hoover's commission on the reorganization of the Executive Branch has decided to move, and Gen. Mark Clark has been named to investigate the structure and organization of the agency. These secret and responsible work assignments of Congress make this move more than any other.

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It is true that this move has probably been pre-announced for some time from the fact of Clark's assignment. It is true, even though General Clark and all others connected with the administration declare with elaborate circumlocution that the threats to investigate have nothing to do with it; but even though it may be in a sense a political preventative, the Hoover study inevitably is going to do some good in straightening out the situation in CIA.

If pushed forward with real vigor and diligence, in fact, it may do away with the necessity for a full-scale public airing which might do real harm to the agency's function as a worldwide listening-device for the government.

The vigor and diligence will be imperative, however, if a good result is to come, because there is no doubt that the CIA thoroughly warrants a house-cleaning and a shake-up. So astute a member of congress as Montana's Sen. Mike Mansfield (D) recently spearheaded a group of senators seeking creation of a commission similar to the Atomic Energy Commission to supervise and control CIA's activities.

The effort has not yet produced much except publicity, but the intentions of the sponsors have been thoroughly constructive. As it is now, CIA operates entirely independent of any control, spends millions of dollars for which it has to make accounting to no one except in the most general terms, wraps about itself a cloak of righteous mystery when anyone attempts to find out what goes on, and generally constitutes a private little empire in which some rather interesting characters operate without restraint, presumably for the good of the country but in no way that can be spelled out in black and white on the public balance sheet.

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If the Hoover Commission follows the pattern of logic usually characteristic of its chairman, it will probably come up with some recommendation along the general lines of the Mansfield bill. It may do so with the cooperation of the director of CIA, Allen Dulles, brother of the secretary of state, or it may do so over his opposition.

Right now Mr. Dulles says he "welcomes" the Hoover project, but he is a man of notoriously thin skin who is not above trying to get the jobs of newspapermen who criticize his agency, and the Hoover Commission may find its task somewhat similar to pulling teeth when it comes to getting Mr. Dulles' real cooperation.

Mr. Dulles' entire attitude toward congress and toward anyone who tries to learn more about his agency is one of arrogant refusal to cooperate, and the sweet air of reason which now prevails vis-a-vis the Hoover Commission may not long remain as it begins to dig deeper under the surface of the CIA.

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Still and all, there is always Joe, breathing fire and seeking new fields to conquer, and he has certainly given ample indication of a desire to look into Central Intelligence. Therefore it would seem to behoove Mr. Dulles to behave, and to cooperate fully with what will probably be the fairest and most sympathetic investigation he is ever going to get. The administration has apparently decided to try the experiment, in this case, of moving first; but only if it moves constructively and completely can it hope to head off another brawling, slug-fest match with the Wisconsin senator.